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REGIONAL SEMINAR HELD IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

As reported briefly in *Women News* No. 2, 1991, a subregional seminar on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was held at Rarotonga, Cook Islands, from 18 to 21 March 1991. Organized jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Governments of Australia, the Cook Islands and New Zealand, the seminar was intended to raise awareness of the Convention and its applicability at the national and regional levels. The participants were selected officials from 13 countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

While only two of these countries, Cook Islands and Niue, had, by virtue of their special relationship with New Zealand, ratified or acceded to the Convention, the constitutions and basic laws in most Pacific Island countries provided for equality between women and men. The participants noted, however, that in practice there were indications of inequality and discrimination against women and that information on the Convention had not been widely disseminated in the region.

The participants concluded that the main benefits to the Pacific Islands States of accession to the Convention were that:

- It allowed the use of the law as an instrument for change and established a standard against which national laws and practices relating to equality could be measured;
- It would stimulate a review of national law to identify those which discriminated against women and thus permitted their modification;
- It would stimulate a review by women of their existing roles in the home, the village and the work place, and in doing so, might enable women to exercise those roles better to the benefit of their communities and societies;
- It would promote self-confidence and self-expression among women;
- It would provide further incentive for the creation and strengthening of national and regional machinery for the advancement of women;
- It would serve to increase respect for, and recognition of, women in the community and the region;
- It would promote equality and solidarity among women at both the national and regional levels, and would promote the exchange of experience, knowledge and skills;
- It would provide incentives and greater opportunities for women to enter the decision-making processes, including political and governmental office;
- It would allow representation of the Pacific Islands region on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
- The reporting process would ensure periodic monitoring of progress and improvement of the status of women in the Pacific Island region.

The main factors identified that might impede rapid accession by Pacific Island States to the Convention included:

- The provisions of the Convention might be perceived not to be in harmony with

existing traditions and customs that provided a basis for identity;

- Many women may not be aware of, nor fully understand, the relevance of the Convention to their daily lives and, as a result, may oppose its adoption;

- They may perceive that equality threatened their status and authority;

- Currently available resources were inadequate to provide information on, and mobilize support for, the accession to, and implementation of, the Convention.

As a result of the deliberations and conclusions reached, the following recommendations were adopted by the Seminar:

- All Pacific Island States should accede to the Convention, ideally without reservation, but where there was concern that certain articles of the Convention may be incompatible with important existing national practice, accession be made with reservations on those points;

- In order to encourage accession to, and implementation of, the Convention the following strategies be employed:

  Women should undertake their own reviews of existing practices to identify those that might constitute an obstacle to accession with a view to participating equally with the drafting of any reservations on the Convention and with a view also to identifying those practices that encouraged equality and which were evolving in that direction;

  After accession to the Convention, women be involved in monitoring the evolution of traditions and customs and national practices that might subsequently effect the withdrawal of reservations;

  Beginning at the grass roots, women should conduct a campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of the Convention to women in their daily lives in the family, the community and the workplace;

  Women's organizations should take the lead in those campaigns, especially such organizations as village councils, trade unions, youth and sports groups, and important institutions such as traditional leadership systems and the churches. Those organizations should use the mass media, national and local seminars, and regional programmes to create that awareness. The Convention should be translated into vernacular languages;

  Existing governmental national machinery for the advancement of women should be reviewed to ensure that it could influence policy at the highest levels, and should be strengthened. In those countries where a national machinery did not exist, priority should be given to its establishment. That should involve a productive partnership between the national machinery and non-governmental organizations;

  Strong efforts, including the use of the electoral process, should be made to encourage men in decision-making positions to support the accession to the Convention by making them aware of the benefits to the family, community and society as a whole, and of women's full participation in national development, as prescribed by the Convention;

  Adequate resources should be made available to enable women to achieve accession to, and implementation of, the Convention. The use of national public resources should be given a high priority to that end. Similarly, efforts should be made to channel both multilateral and bilateral external assistance to those efforts;

  Information on external sources of funding should be disseminated by regional organizations such as the Secretariat of the South Pacific Forum, the South Pacific Commission, the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Pacific Regional Young Women Christian Association, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the University of the South Pacific and others;

  In order to facilitate access to those funds, procedures should be revised to make them as simple as possible,

and should be streamlined to expedite the delivery of human, technical and financial resources;

Priority should be given to revising the criteria for data collection to ensure that the role of women was clearly identifiable in national statistics;

It was also recommended that, as follow-up, the report of the Seminar should be presented to appropriate regional bodies and institutions, that efforts should be made to publish the complete report and that further regional seminars should be organized to monitor progress in the region.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

7-11 October 1991:
Seminar on women, ageing and development, Vienna

4-8 November 1991:
Global Assembly on Women and the Environment, Miami

11-15 November 1991:
Expert group meeting on violence against women, Vienna

9-11 December 1991:
Seminar on the integration of women in development, Vienna

20-31 January 1992:
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, eleventh session, New York

9-10 March 1992:
16th Ad Hoc Interagency Meeting on Women, Vienna

11-20 March 1992:
Commission on the Status of Women, thirty-sixth session, Vienna

REGIONAL SEMINAR HELD IN VIENNA

A regional seminar on the Impact of Economic and Political Reform on the Status of Women in Eastern Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was held in Vienna, from 8 to 12 April 1991. Organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, with substantive support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), it was attended by 2 consultants and 23 experts as well as observers from 18 Member States, 6 United Nations bodies, 24 non-governmental organizations, 6 research institutes and 1 university.

Fears had been expressed at both the tenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the thirty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women that the social and economic reforms that were taking place in the former centrally planned economy countries of Eastern Europe could have a detrimental effect on the status of women rather than being used as a chance to establish new practices based on equality. It was stressed during the seminar that it was too early to draw final conclusions as to the impact of the changes. It was already possible, however, to identify trends from the viewpoint of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

Advancement of women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has had mixed success but clearly has not eliminated the subordinate position of women in society. All the participants mentioned that the restructuring process had made it possible to examine critically the drawbacks of the previous system. Although provision had been made for equal rights and a number of institutional measures had been introduced, negative effects included the high concentration of women in the lower levels of professional and skill structures; low representation of women in the decision-making bodies, especially at the higher levels; and a continuation of a division of labour in the family in which responsibilities were not equally shared.

The nature of reform in each country differs according to national conditions, both in terms of past development and present resources, and each has set its own priorities in economic and social spheres. A common factor, however, as confirmed in all 23 case-studies presented to the seminar, is that the advancement of women is not considered an important factor, let alone a major priority, in the reform process. Many experts underlined that unemployment, plant closures and sectoral readjustments were already mostly evident in industries where women's employment predominated. In the political sphere, where women were not well represented at the highest levels in the past but did have considerable formal participation in the parliaments, a further decline

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is being witnessed. Decreasing social services, including the closure of child-care facilities, also have a negative effect on women.

In identifying ways to change these negative trends into a positive legal and economic environment for the advancement of women, the seminar made recommendations in four areas: women in the economy; the role and tasks of national machinery for the advancement of women; reproductive rights; and international cooperation. The importance of in-depth research on gender issues, the inclusion of non-governmental organizations in the planning and implementation of programmes and projects, and the dissemination of information were stressed.

In order to ensure that women do not bear a disproportionate share of the burden of the social and economic restructuring, women's interests should be integrated into social and economic policy, including the formulation of structural adjustment policies, by increasing gender awareness in all levels of government; ensuring that gender issues are incorporated into all decisions relating to economic transformation; and increasing women's participation in economic decision-making. Governments should ensure that social and economic policies are in compliance with international instruments. Reference was made to Article 4 of the Convention relating to temporary special measures, in which context it was stated that affirmative action should be taken at all levels.

Educational programmes, aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes and encouraging the equitable sharing of household duties and family responsibilities, should be developed at all levels of education. The importance of the training and retraining of women to reduce unemployment and to integrate them into the mainstream economy was stressed. This should be provided not only by Governments but also by employers, unions and non-governmental organizations, and assistance should be provided to help each country to establish the type of training infrastructure that best meets the needs of those to be trained and the conditions of its economic market. Women should have equal access to entrepreneurship training, and financial schemes, such as revolving loan funds, should be introduced for small-scale women entrepreneurs as well as special measures in the reform of banking systems to ensure access to credit.

Public and private investment should be made in social support services, particularly child-care services, in order to remove constraints on women's participation in paid labour activity. Parental leave policies should be developed and steps should be taken to increase the incentives for fathers to share with child care.

In order to have the appropriate impact, national machinery should be placed at the highest possible governmental level. Focal points for women should be established in all ministries and in units at the regional and local level. National machinery should also pay full attention to grass-roots activities and should develop linkages with women's organizations, local trade unions, lobby groups, researchers and teachers, so that the concerns of women are reflected in the formulation and implementation of policies. A continuous exchange of information on current women's issues should be ensured between national machinery and non-governmental women's movements. The need for both national machinery and autonomous women's organizations to have access to adequate financial resources in order to be effective was recognized.

Reaffirming the fundamental human right of women to control their own fertility and to decide freely on the number and spacing of their children, the seminar recommended that reliable contraceptive methods should be easily available to avoid unwanted pregnancies without having to resort to abortion and that legal and medically sound methods of pregnancy termination should be accessible. Family planning programmes and services giving necessary information, education and counselling as well as modern and safe methods of contraception that were easily and continuously available should be provided to all persons by Governments, appropriate organizations and agencies, and non-governmental and grass-roots organizations.

Special attention was given to the issues of international co-operation. It was stressed that technical and financial assistance directed toward priority programmes and projects that are particularly important during the transitional period in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union should not lose sight of the long-term goals and should be designed to ensure that women participate in and benefit from such assistance.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

Interregional Consultation postponed

The Interregional Consultation on Women in Public Life, scheduled to take place in Vienna, from 10 to 12 September 1991, has been postponed until further notice.

In resolution 44/77, the General Assembly endorsed the holding of the Consultation "within existing resources, voluntary and other contributions" and in resolution 45/127, it invited "Governments and national institutions and organizations to provide extrabudgetary resources to facilitate preparations for the consultation, especially for the participation of least developed countries and for the dissemination of information about the consultation". In preparing for the Consultation, it became clear that such resources were inadequate. This will be reported to the General Assembly and to the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Consultation will be rescheduled in the context of preparations for the 1995 world conference on women.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ADOPTS RESOLUTIONS ON WOMEN

Resolutions

1991/17	Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat
1991/18	Violence against women in all its forms
1991/19	Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women
1991/20	Women and children under apartheid
1991/21	Disabled women
1991/22	National, regional and international machinery for the advancement of women
1991/23	Refugee and displaced women and children
1991/24	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
1991/25	Elimination of discrimination against women in accordance with the aims of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Decisions

1991/231	Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its thirty-fifth session, and provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-sixth session of the Commission
1991/232	Request for additional conference facilities during the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Expert Group Meeting

An expert group meeting on the role of women in public life was held in Vienna, from 21 to 24 May 1991. The participants comprised 7 experts, 2 consultants and 1 resource person, and representatives from 21 Member States, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 1 United Nations body and 19 non-governmental organizations as well as 3 independent persons who attended as observers. The meeting was planned to prepare for both the priority theme under "peace" for the thirty sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and for the Interregional Consultation planned for September 1991. The substantive content of the meeting will be reported in a future issue of *Women 2000* .

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

United Nations programmes for the advancement of women will be discussed in the Third (Economic and Social) Committee of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. As well as the annual reports on CEDAW, INSTRAW and UNIFEM, the Assembly will have before it a report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. This report indicates the approaches being taken to the priority themes to be considered at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It also reports progress on issues raised at the last session of the General Assembly, particularly with reference to the plans for a world conference on women in 1995; the situation of women in the secretariats of the United Na-

tions system; and the further development of the United Nations public information programme to promote the advancement of women.

THE WORLD'S WOMEN

The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, recently published by the United Nations, is a collaborative effort of United Nations bodies concerned with promoting women's equality and participation in development. It provides data and analysis on topics including economic life, population, leadership and decision-making; health and child-bearing, and education. The book, which contains data from 178 countries, was prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office with the collaboration of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Office at Vienna, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNIFEM.

The idea behind producing this book was "to provide the numbers and analysis needed to understand how conditions are changing or not changing for women - and to do it in a way that will reach women, the media and women's advocates everywhere. ... It provides concerned women and men with information thay can use to inform people everywhere about how much women contribute to economic life, political life and family life and to support appeals to persuade public and private decision-makers to change policies that are unfair to women."

Some facts contained in the book are:

Three quarters of women aged 25 and over in much of Africa and Asia are still illiterate.

The number of female enrolments in higher education in the developed regions, western Asia, some countries of southern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean have increased rapidly and now almost equal those of males.

Women's share in the labour force increased between 1970 and 1990 in almost every region, but the gap between women's and men's recorded economic participation remains wide.

Women make up less than 4 per cent of parliamentary representation in at least 40 countries and hold no positions at the ministerial level in nearly 100 countries.

Women and children make up an estimated 70 to 80 per cent of the world's 14 million refugees.

Women are having fewer children than they did 20 years ago

The book is available from the United Nations Sales Section in Geneva and New York, under Sales No. E.90.XVII.3, for $US 19.95.

WHO HEALTHY CITIES PROJECT CONVENES WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM

A European regional symposium entitled Women, Health and Urban Policies was held in Vienna, from 13 to 15 May 1991, within the framework of the World Health Organization's Healthy Cities Project. Organized jointly by WHO, the Austrian Government and the Municipality of Vienna, the meeting was attended by over 350 participants from 22 European countries and representing a broad range of professions, such as politicians, town planners, social workers, doctors and nurses, as well as many related interest groups.

Diverse aspects of city life and its effects on women's health were examined. Workshops were held on the following topics: the city between anonimity, isolation and communication; the political city; working in the city; future healthy cities; women and medicine: health-care delivery in urban areas; care in the city; the city: healthy living environment for women; and the city conducive to health. Particular attention was given to the changing conditions in the Eastern European countries.

The outcome of the Symposium was the adoption of a statement with the objective of launching a process to enable women to decide on their own health, at the personal, social and political levels. There was agreement among the participants that networking between cities and countries was of the utmost importance and that such a network should be extended beyond the region to the rest of the world.

UNIFEM

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) presented its annual report to its Governing Council in June.

The report identifes longer term priorities: food security, and

trade and industry supported by technical concentrations on credit, technology transfer and small-scale development, which correspond to the principal constraints on women's productivity: time, energy and credit. Food-cycle activities, and the support of UNIFEM to them, include land preparation, production, harvesting, storage, processing, preservation, transport, distribution and marketing of staple food crops. Integral to the food-security focus are environmental concerns. Women juggle their responsibilities for providing families with food, fuel and water with the management of deteriorating resources. So long as women remain poor and have few choices, fragile eco-systems will be threatened. With regard to trade and industry, UNIFEM concentrates on the identification of constraints faced by women in establishing viable commercial enterprises, on developing innovative approaches to overcoming such constraints, and on encouraging credit, training, pricing and other policies that reflect gender consideration.

The shorter term priorities take their shape within the regional programmes that are refined and updated every two years. They identify the region-specific goals for programme and advocacy during the two-year period and the operational strategies for achieving these goals, as well as providing scope for identifying and acting upon emerging issues and new requirements, which may later be translated from the regional to the global perspective.

As an independent entity operating purely from voluntary contributions, UNIFEM is very active in mobilizing funds. Total pledges for 1991 showed an increase of 13 per cent over the pledges for 1990 - proof of the growing awareness of the critical role that women play in the development process.

In her address to the Governing Council, in which she concentrated on human development, the Director of UNIFEM said that new forms of leadership were required. The promotion of broad-based indigenous leadership needed to go hand-in-hand with the technical approach to development and needed to acknowledge that some leaders are indeed born women. Women had often been invisible, however, and the powerful and creative energy of women ignored. It was one of the roles of UNIFEM to make women visible and bring to light women's enormous resources and their valuable contribution to development.

INSTRAW

Ms. Margaret Shields (New Zealand) has been appointed Director of the United Nations International Institute for Research and Training for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). She will be the second Director of the Institute, succeeding Ms. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic, who is currently the Director of Natural Resources and Energy Division in the United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation and Development. Ms. Shields was formerly Minister of Women's Affairs in New Zealand where she had previously held other Cabinet posts. For nine years before her election to Parliament in 1981 she was a social statistician in the New Zealand Department of Statistics.

UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) adopted a policy and strategy on women in development in 1987. A recent review of the achievements made in implementing it highlights the increased awareness created for the girl child and notes important advocacy publications and events. Sectoral analyses show that critical problems remain in the key areas of girls' and women's education, health, work-load reduction, income and control over development resources, legal status and participation in decision-making. Recommendations for further action include: implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action (which make explicit commitments to strengthen the role and status of women, beginning with the girl child) in conjunction with the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; priority focus on girls' and women's education and delayed marriage; a comprehensive approach to women's health; increased gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation of country programmes; staff training in gender and women's issues; and strengthening of UNICEF organizational capacity.

UNFPA

The Global Programme of Training in Population and Development is designed specifically to enhance the capabilities of professionals from developing countries in integrating population policy and development strategy. It addresses itself to staff mem-

bers of macro-economic policy and planning units, sectoral ministries, population programme officers and individuals having operational responsibilities at field level. In line with UNFPA overall policy, and provided they meet the requirements, female candidates are given priority.

The Global Programme currently comprises five post-graduate training courses. Long-term courses are offered in English in Trivandrum, India and The Hague, the Netherlands; in French in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium; and in Spanish in Santiago, Chile. A medium-term course is offered in English and Russian at Moscow, the Soviet Union.

Information on the Global Programme can be obtained from: International Coordinator, UNFPA Global Programme of Training in Population and Development, 1, Place Montesquieu, bte.17, B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

UNHCR

Following her election by the General Assembly, Ms. Sadako Ogata took up her post this year as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, bringing the number of women at the Under and Assistant Secretary-General levels in the United Nations system to seven. Previously Independent Expert on human rights in Myanmar for the Commission of the United Nations on Human Rights, Ms. Ogata had been Japan's representative to the Commission from 1982 to 1985. She was also a Dean of Foreign Studies at Sophia Univerity in Tokyo, where she had been a professor since 1980. From 1978 to 1979 she was Chairperson of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). During the same period she was Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, having served as Minister there from 1976 to 1978. She was a delegate of Japan to six regular sessions of the General Assembly and also to the tenth special session devoted to disarmament.

SECRETARY-GENERAL INTRODUCES FURTHER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MEASURES

The target of achieving 30 per cent of women in Professional level posts in the Secretariat by 1990 was not quite achieved, and the majority of the 28.7 per cent women are to be found in the lower levels. In 1990, only 7.8 per cent of senior management posts in the Secretariat were occupied by women; 15.2 per cent of middle managment posts; 34.2 per cent of regular Professional posts and 43.1 per cent at the entry level. In order to accelerate the process of increasing the number of women in senior posts, the General Assembly, in resolution 45/125, proposed new targets of 35 per cent in Professional level posts, including 25 per cent at the senior policy- and decision-making levels by 1995.

In an effort to comply with this mandate, and on the recommendation of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, the Secretary-General recently introduced additional affirmative action measures.

These relate to the areas of assignment, promotion and recruitment and stipulate that in offices having less than 35 per cent women overall and in those with less than 25 per cent women at levels P-5 and above, vacancies shall be filled by women, provided there are one or more fully qualified female candidates. Exceptions will be made when a post has been vacant for 18 months and despite the best efforts of all concerned it has not been possible to identify or secure a qualified women candidate or when the post is filled through a competitive examination.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

In view of difficulties encountered in meeting regular production schedules and in the light of the importance of disseminating more in-depth information prior to the 1995 women's world conference, it has been decided to discontinue the separate issuance of *Women News* and to increase the number of issues of *Women 2000* from three to five per year, as of 1991, including in it some of the information previously presented in *Women News* .

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